

PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2014
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
POLICE DEPARTMENT
COMMUNITY ROOM
MIDDLETOWN CONNECTICUT

Members Present: Chair Carl R. Chisem
Councilman David Bauer
Councilman James B. Streeto
Councilman Thomas Serra
Councilwoman Sandra Russo-Driska

Staff Present: William Russo, Public Works Director
Thomas Nigosanti, Chief Engineer
Tina Gomes, Chief Management Analyst

Weston & Sampson: Alan Nafis

Others Present: Patricia Hill
John Klause
Raymond E. Roberts
David Wesoloski
Tisha Zawisky
Marshall & Kim Molski
Sarah Wilson
Phil & Bonnie Aparo
Kim Hootney
Frank F. Vinci, Jr.
Bob Santangelo
Linda O'Hara
David Shultz
John Hall

John Phillips
Scott Macdonald
George Winter
Gislaine Ortiz Jimenez
Chris & Paul Piantek
Lise VanSaun
Jennifer Kleindienst
Dennis & Sharon Hurd
Earl Roberts
Kim Godfrey
Amy Pellenn
Jim Kowalski
Lindsey Fralik

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TOWN CLERK
MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

The Public Works and Facilities Commission Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made to table the January 8, 2014 meeting. Motion was seconded and approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Scott MacDonald of 109 Scenic View Drive stated that over the past six or seven years he has conducted much research on the issue of winter road maintenance. Over the past ten years or so, the State of Connecticut has stopped using sand along with many other municipalities. He believes that the City of Middletown needs to make a decision in terms of public safety, public health, the environment and the expenditure of tax payer money and that the decision should be based on the most up to date and relevant research.

Back in 2009, Scott called into a radio station and spoke about how municipal governments can save money. He suggested that if they buy the enhanced salt in bulk, it would save money and would help with the spring clean-up. He made a suggestion to Director Russo for him to look into it as well. In the fall of 2009, Director Russo asked Tina Gomes to research the issue and contact some other municipalities.

Tina contacted four other municipalities consisting of Wallingford, East Hartford, West Hartford and Manchester. All four municipalities suggested moving away from sand. They spoke about the money they were saving and how much better it was for the environment. A representative named John Phillips of West Hartford recommended moving away from salt as well.

Scott then went to Public Works Commission in 2010 with an article about how Avon was saving \$86,000.00 per year by not using sand. After the meeting, the commission had gotten to the point where they wanted to run a program the following year using Clearlane. A representative came in and spoke about it. The Public Works Director of East Hartford composed an email to Director Russo wishing him luck and that there is no good reason to keep using the sand/salt mixture and that they have been through nine winters without any sand.

Scott stressed the importance of anti-icing and de-icing. Anti-icing is keeping the snow and ice off of the road at the beginning of a snow storm. De-icing is taking snow and ice off of the road after the storm has already begun. He provided a few examples for snow and ice removal. One example includes Utah State University's report on winter road maintenance from 2008 stated that anti-icing should be the first in the series of strategies for winter storms to keep the snow from building up for 4-6 hours. When using rock salt and sand, after 5 vehicles going 38 miles per hour, 70% of it is dispersed to the side of the road or packed into the snow. With Clearlane enhanced wet salt, 93% of it remains on the road after only one passing.

Sandra Russo-Driska stated that if he has any further discussion to just email it to the commission members.

Scott then wrapped up the conversation and handed out some packets including the study on snow and ice removal in other states and agencies. He wanted to know if this issue will be on the agenda next month because if actions are not taken soon, there will not be any Clearlane available for next year. He was told by one of the councilmen that the information will have to go before the staff in order to determine what goes on the agendas.

Earl Roberts stated that he was dissatisfied to see that his issue on the Reservoir Road gate closure was not on the agenda for this meeting. He was notified by one of the councilmen that an issue like that would have to go before the General Council. It was verified that Chair Chisem and another councilman communicated with the General Council and were advised that the property is state owned with no formalized right of way. With that being said, there is nothing that the commission can do and it is recommended that he should communicate through the City Council to make arrangements.

Earl would like to know if the commission can speak with the General Council regarding permanent easements and right of ways for those that pay taxes on Reservoir Road. He wants to be sure that the issue was addressed to the General Council properly. He also requested that for the next meeting, he would like any alterations on the agenda to be noticed for public comment which was then agreed upon by one of the councilmen.

into fixing the streets. Some sidewalks and pedestrian ramps will be replaced or repaired along with some minor drainage improvements in problem areas.

Chair Chisem stated that if anyone from the public would like to comment, they can do so. He asked if Alan Nafis can stay to answer questions on specific properties.

A member of the public asked how many properties will be affected in terms of their land. They also wanted to know what would happen to the house that sits right on the tip of the triangle that will be undergoing construction on Ridge Road. Alan Nafis stated that stakes are placed for surveying purposes and that there may be some grading that goes on with some properties, but nothing major. The house on the tip of the triangle will not be affected because the area will only be closed up and grass will be planted. The retaining wall will remain untouched and any work being done will go around it.

Amy Pellenn, of 410 Ridge Road, stated that she is the resident that lives in the house at the tip of the triangle and that the road is a disaster as it is with speeding. She does not want to see the majority of the traffic cutting in front of her house. She would rather have the traffic be closer to the school so that it is farther away from her house. Tom Nigosanti stated that the same amount of traffic will go by; the cars will just stop closer to the house. Director Russo stated that the main goal is to address the safety issue with the intersection. When you drive on to East Ridge Road, you almost have to turn all the way to the left to see ongoing traffic. The walkers on the intersection are also concerned with the speeds and the cars parking on the road in the area.

Another member from the public wanted to address the parking issue for the school. Director Russo stated that Public Works & Facilities Department is working with the school. The department cannot take money out of a road bond that was voted on to provide more parking for the school. They have to stick to what was voted on, which is the road, but it is also in the plan to provide more parking in the area in front of the school. Tom Nigosanti stated that a part of a road way will be removed during the reconstruction. In the future it can be made into a parking lot for parents dropping off their children at school.

Patricia Hill of 364 Ridge Road asked where the stop signs were going to be placed and if there will be any stop signs being placed on Ridge Road to stop traffic in the area. A 4-way stop sign will be at the intersection so that all cars will have come to a stop. Patricia also wanted to know where the potential parking lot would be placed. Tom Nigosanti stated that the school would use the same entrance and that they would just add on to what already exists.

Linda O'Hara of 424 Ridge Road wanted to know if the road was going to be shortened through the parking lot. Tom Nigosanti indicated that the road will go in front of 410 Ridge Road and the prospective parking will then go in the spot where the road is being removed.

Jim Kowalski of 440 Ridge Road wanted to get a better understanding on the improved safety of the children with new crosswalks and also wants to know how the children will enter and exit from the prospective parking lot. Tom Nigosanti specified that it is not a parking lot that is meant for parking cars and leaving them there all day. It would strictly be for parents dropping their kids off and leaving. This makes the area more suitable for parking rather than having children cross a road.

Lindsey Fralik of 440 Ridge Road wanted to know if instead of having a 4 way intersection, if it can be just made into a point where there is all green in the middle. Tom Nigosanti stated that it has been thought about but it is not practical. It would make it harder for people driving considering the almost impossible turn that would have to be made.

David Shultz of 409 Ridge Road wanted to know how difficult of a turn it would be for the Fire Engines that come up East Ridge and go on to Ridge Road. He also wanted to know about the safety of the sidewalk that is in front of George Winter's house, 18 East Ridge Road, which is almost part of the road. Tom Nigosanti stated that the trees will be taken down and the sidewalk will be moved back so that the road and the sidewalk are separated by grass and curbing. Sandra Russo-Driska asked Tom to verify if there would be enough room for fire engines to make the necessary turn accurately. Tom then reassured David that there will be plenty of room for fire engines.

George Winter of 18 East Ridge Road spoke about the 33-34 foot right of way near his house. He also wanted to know how the parents would pick their kids up with a parking lot in front of the school keeping in mind all of the traffic. Tom Nigosanti stated that most of the area whether there is curbing there or not, is not for cars to park on in the first place. Ridge Road further north is much wider and there is more room to park down in that direction. This would be the only place that cars should be parking on the street. The Board of Education is considering the putting the parking lot in, but Tom is unsure of how far they've gotten with the planning.

Brooke Carta, employee of Farm Hill School, stated that the parking lot is more of a drive through area and not an actual parking lot. She wanted clarification that the parking lot will not be a part of this current project and that it is all the Board of Education's responsibility. A member from the Commission stated that the Common Council will take over the bonding for the Board of Education and there has been no decision as of yet.

Sarah Wilson of 6 Deerfield Avenue wanted to know what material the sidewalks and curbs will be made out of. She also wanted to know more about the tree removal and the telephone poles that stand in the way. Alan Nafis stated that the sidewalk and curbing is made of mostly concrete and will be ADA compliant, 4 feet in width.

Howard Reid of 6 Newtown Street stated that his house is on the corner of Ridge Road which is immediately adjacent to the intersection. He hopes that there has been careful consideration as far as plans for maximizing safety for people walking and driving in the area considering that cars seldom stop in the required spots. He believes the sidewalks are not in good shape and there is no protection from the road to the sidewalk. He said that it is evident that neighbors in the area do not want a parking lot in the location spoken about. If the B.O.E. goes ahead with the plan to put a parking lot or drop off area, he would like to know if there is going to be a public hearing for it so that neighbors can have the opportunity to express their strong opposition to the idea. He was reassured by a commission member that once the council approves the bonding, there will be a public hearing.

Director Russo stated that any tree that is removed is planned out with the homeowners and the forestry commission regarding the species. Trees that exceed 30 feet are no longer planted for safety reasons during storms. Homeowners will be shown the type of species that they pick. Setbacks of about 10-12 are the preferred method so that trees are not placed on the snow shelf

where trucks can hit them. Spots without wires are chosen and homeowners are personally included in the decision on where to put the trees.

John Phillips of 253 East Ridge Road would like to see the whole sidewalk from Randolph Road all the way up because of the high traffic volume on the sidewalk and for overall improvement of the neighborhood. He believes the opportunity for the infrastructure is right, and that the Board of Education should be encouraged to dissipate the project now so that the work won't be completed in scattered time frames. The opportunity currently arises for overall changes to the area, so everything should be completed at one time.

Jennifer Kleindienst of 70 Pearl Street believes that full length sidewalks are a very effective solution for children walking to school and the residents that live there. She also wanted to know if accommodations will be made for bicyclists. Tom stated that as far as bicyclists there are no plans for accommodations.

Kim Godfrey of 6 Deerfield Avenue wanted to piggyback on some sidewalk statements. Many children walk in the area and it is unsafe for residents and children. Kim also wanted to know if sidewalks will be installed on Ryan Street, which was answered later on that there will be no installation of sidewalks. She wanted to know if the road can be moved farther away so that it goes past the school. Tom stated that it would be too close to the school and it would also be a tighter curb which wouldn't meet the turning requirements.

John Hall, representing the local environmental organization which is the Jonah Center for Earth and Art stated that over the last couple of years, the city has developed a complete streets plan. The phrase complete streets, refers to a state law that urges or requires municipalities to spend 1% of road improvement money on improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists. A master plan has been developed especially for improved access around schools. Complete Streets Committee has identified Ridge Road as a very important level road for cyclists and pedestrians. The Complete Streets Committee does recommend that the sidewalks be extended along East Ridge Road and Ridge Road toward Randolph Road.

Chris Piansek of 175 East Ridge Road is concerned about her gardens that are close to the street, as well as her water line to her house from the city. Director Russo stated that the water pipes will be marked off and Call Before You Dig will be contacted before any digging takes place. Anything that gets damaged, if any, will be repaired or replaced to the homeowners liking.

Homeowner of 550 Ridge Road, across from the cemetery, requested that there be more crosswalks throughout Ridge Road to eliminate the speeding considering the high volume of pedestrians going towards the school.

Councilman Serra stated that sidewalks should be designed that allow the maximum number of children to walk to school. Coordination with the traffic control office is needed and recommended that if there are any proposed changes in parking it should be put on the table now before it gets postponed.

A motion was made for a continuation to the next meeting with the changes to the sidewalks and the associated prices involved so that it is prepared to go to council. It was requested that the drawings be made available on the city website. Motion was made and seconded.

- b. Discussion for Consultant on Park Renovations – Continued to March 12, 2014 Public Works & Facilities Commission Meeting. A motion to postpone was made and seconded.
- c. Discussion on Palmer Field Rates for Field Rental and Sign Advertisement - Continued to March 12, 2014 Public Works & Facilities Commission Meeting. A motion to postpone was made and seconded.
- d. Sidewalk Snow Shoveling Ordinance – A comment was made about the comment at the bottom of the ordinance that states “Approved by the General Council Commission”. It was stated that the Ordinance Committee approves that ordinances have the proper wording.

Director Russo stated that the ordinance was copied from the ordinance book. The only language change is for the fines. Currently, the biggest problem in Middletown is un-shoveled sidewalks and absentee landlords. There is some discussion as to who should fine. The Sidewalk Conformance Inspector sends out fines to the homeowner or landlord to try and get as many sidewalks shoveled as possible. If the fines are not paid, they go to collections.

Director Russo specified that there are 100 miles of sidewalks in the City of Middletown. Outside of the fact that there are liability issues, there is not enough man power to go through and shovel sidewalks during every snow storm. This item was removed from the ordinance.

Councilwoman Russo-Driska stated that the ordinance should include who has the authority to enforce the sidewalk fines. Director Russo stated that it is to be left as-is where the Sidewalk Conformance Inspector will give out the fines and then from there on out, it will go to the Public Safety Commission. He stated that the wording can be added to the ordinance by speaking with the General Council and/or the Ordinance Committee.

Director Russo stated that another issue is contractors plowing snow into city roads after city employees are done plowing, which is a topic for another discussion, but he wanted to bring it to the commission’s attention.

The topic of the snow shoveling ordinance will be further discussed. Director Russo asked the commission to forward via email any comments that should be added to the ordinance and he will then pass them on to the General Council.

A motion to postpone was seconded and approved.

- e. Street Name Approval – Director Russo stated that there is a list of names in the history of Middletown to choose from when naming streets. There are three choices for the commission to discuss which are Pashley Lane, Ridgeview Drive and Fall Brook Drive. The street naming is for a new street within the Jablonski Property Subdivision.

Councilwoman Russo-Driska believes the new street should be named Pashley Lane due to the argumentative email she read. Sandra believes that the seller of the property should be honored with their choice of name.

A 4-1 motion was made to send the street naming of Pashley Lane to the council.

- f. Half Marathon – Director Russo stated that he was asking for an endorsement with no financial impact to the Public Works & Facilities Commission.

One of the commissioners stated that they want to impinge on possible city resources, and feels that they should be contributing something towards the city.

Director Russo stated that they are planning on using Union Park to stage 1,000 runners at the 2014 Harvard Pilgrim Middletown Half on Sunday, April 6th.

A 4-1 motion was made and seconded for endorsement on the half marathon.

- g. High School Baseball Playoffs – 2014 Palmer Field – One of the commissioners stated that Connecticut All Stars are playing the Massachusetts All Stars. They have requested June 21, 2014 for an 11:00 A.M. game for the seniors and a 2:00 P.M. game for the juniors at Palmer Field. Director Russo stated that will make sure the field is available on those dates.

The commission approves the three dates of June 10, 13 and 14 for the CIAC baseball tournaments, with the amendment of the 21st for the high school All Star teams.

Motion was made and seconded by the commission for approval on the 4 dates.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. January 2014 Overtime Report – any questions on the report can be called in to the department in the future.
- b. January 2014 Building Permits – any questions on the report can be called in to the department in the future.

OTHER

- a. December 2013 Monthly Report – Highway Division - any questions on the report can be called in to the department in the future.
- b. December 2013 Weekly Reports – Parks Division – One of the commissioners requested that they would like the Parks overtime report to resemble the Public Works overtime report.

As there was no further discussion, the Public Works & Facilities Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:46 P.M.